REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Non-Final Office Action dated January 10, 2008, issued in connection with the above-identified application. Presently, claims 1, 2, 5 and 7-13 are pending in the present application. With this Response, independent claims 1, 2, 5, and 7-13 have been rejected in this Office Action. No new matter has been introduced by this Response. Entry of the amendments and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

35 USC 112 Rejections

Claims 1 and 7-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 and 7-9 have been amended to traverse such rejections.

Claim 1 now reads, in part, "processing means for maintaining a user space within the virtual space, wherein the user space comprises spatial locations that virtually represent ~~physical~~ areas owned and occupied by a first user, and wherein the first user controls admission of other users within the user space for chat sessions with the first user." Claims 7-9 contain similar language.

The amended language is fully supported by the specification. For example, see the specification in paragraph 7 stating, in part, "allowing a user to own space which cannot be entered by other users without obtaining permission."

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 7-9 are in condition for allowance.

35 USC 103(a) Rejections

Claims 1-2, 5, and 7-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Estrada et al (US Patent 6,732,148), hereinafter Estrada, Hatlelid et al (US Patent 6,722,195), hereinafter Hatlelid and Bunney et al (US Patent 6,446,112), hereinafter Bunney. Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 and 7-9 have been amended to traverse such rejections.

Claim 1 now reads, in part, "<u>wherein the determining means also determines, based on a time associated with the request for admission, whether the second user is denied admission to</u>

the user space based on a passing of a predetermined period of time." Claims 7-9 contain similar language.

The amendments are fully supported by the specification. For example, see the published specification in paragraph 68 stating, "It is determined whether a predetermined period of time (such as one minute) has passed since the space management server 3 which has determined that the visitor is not on the member list has transmitted data indicating that the visitor has come. If the determination is affirmative, the space management server 3 transmits in step S22 a message indicating that the admission is denied."

The prior art does not disclose or suggest an determining means to determine if a predetermined period of time has elapsed to deny entry as is claimed and fully supported by the specification. For example, the reference Hatelid is directed to a system that requires voting from the current participants but does not disclose determining entry based on a predetermined period of time. Additionally, the references Bunney and Estrada cannot be relied upon to cure the deficiencies of Hatelid.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 and 7-9, and Claims 2, 5 and 10-13 that depend therefrom, are patentably distinguishable and in condition for allowance.

If any additional fees are due in connection with this application as a whole, the Director is authorized to deduct such fees from deposit account no. 02-1818.

Respectfully submitted,

BY _____

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